

PRESS RELEASE
MAY 5, 2009

The Judges of the United States District Court for the District of Massachusetts, announce a new "Plan for the Appointment of Counsel for Indigent Parties in Certain Civil Cases."

Every year, hundreds of indigent plaintiffs file their own civil lawsuits in the United States District Court for the District of Massachusetts, seeking relief regarding a variety of matters, from prisoners' claims about unconstitutional treatment by corrections authorities to individuals claiming discrimination in employment or housing. In an appropriate case, the Court may grant a party's motion for the appointment of volunteer pro bono counsel. When that occurs, the appointment will be made from among those lawyers who actively have expressed an interest in providing pro bono representation in this Court.

In addition to the many individuals who volunteer as pro bono counsel, many Boston-area law firms have formally committed to participate in the Courts recently announced Plan for the Appointment of Counsel for Indigent Parties in Certain Civil Cases, governing the appointment of counsel in pro bono cases pending in the Courts Eastern Division that are not employment related. The Court expects additional firms will join the Plan in the future.

The objective of this new Plan is to facilitate the appointment of pro bono counsel for indigent pro se parties when such appointment has been authorized by the Court. The Plan maximizes each participating law firm's ability voluntarily to choose cases appropriate for that firm and to minimize the assignment of cases only by rotation among participating firms. Under the Plan, participating law firms agree to assume responsibility for one pro bono case, if one is available. When the Court seeks pro bono counsel in a case, the Court will invite the participating firms and all other attorneys who have expressed an interest in pro bono work to accept appointment as pro bono counsel. Where pro bono counsel is not located through this invitation, the Court will assign the case to a participating firm that is not currently representing a party through the Court's pro bono program. The Plan does not apply to cases where a plaintiff asserts employment-related claims. A separate panel of volunteer counsel who specialize in employment-related cases will be available for appointment in those cases.

A reception will be held on Monday May 11, 2009 at 4:00 p.m. in the Atrium of the John Joseph Moakley Courthouse to recognize and thank the law firms who have made a commitment to this program.

If your organization will be sending a reporter or

photographer to cover this event, please contact Ginny Hurley, by telephone at 617-748-9166 or by email at ginny_hurley@mad.uscourts.gov.

THE CURRENT LIST OF PARTICIPATING FIRMS

Bingham McCutchen LLP
Bromberg & Sunstein LLP
Choate, Hall & Stewart LLP
Day Pitney LLP
Dechert LLP
DLA Piper
Fish & Richardson PC
Foley & Lardner LLP
Foley Hoag LLP
Goodwin Procter LLP
Goulston & Storrs PC
McDermott Will & Emery LLP
Mintz Levin Cohn Ferris Glovsky & Popeo PC
Nixon Peabody LLP
Nutter McClennen & Fish LLP
Ropes & Gray LLP
Seyfarth Shaw LLP
Sherin & Lodgen LLP
Skadden, Arps, Slate, Meagher & Flom LLP
Sullivan & Worcester LLP
Todd & Weld LLP
Wilmer Cutler Pickering Hale and Dorr LLP

Contact: Sarah Allison Thornton
Clerk of the Court
U.S. District Court, District of Massachusetts
(617) 748-9165
Sarah_thornton@mad.uscourts.gov